

Assessing Memory Problems

Assessing memory problems begins with understanding what problems a person has with forgetting, changes in mood or behavior. Many causes of memory loss can be reversed. Even the progression of Alzheimer's Disease can be slowed down. In fact, a doctor cannot make a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease until other diseases or conditions have been shown not to be causing memory problems.

Before Going to the Doctor's Office

It will save time at the doctor's office if someone who has known the patient for a while can provide the information about the patient's symptoms. See the chart on the next page.

The Day of the Appointment for a Medical Assessment:

Bring the chart about the patient's memory problems. Also bring eye glasses, hearing aids, devices that help the person walk, a list of medications the person is taking, and other personal items that might help diagnose the patient's problems. Bring insurance information. If information about the patient's medical history is available (results of a recent physical exam; information about past surgeries, etc.), bring them to the appointment.

The doctor will test the patient's ability to remember, understand, talk and do simple calculations. The patient may be asked to spell a word backwards, write a sentence or copy a design. The doctor will ask about the patient's eating patterns. He will check the blood pressure and pulse. He will look for other diseases (such as heart or respiratory diseases) that may be causing the memory problems.

Sometimes a neurologist will examine the patient; if not, the regular doctor will look for problems of the brain and nervous system. The doctor will test coordination, muscles, eye movement, speech, and sensation. The doctor will test reflexes by tapping the knee, check the patient's ability to sense feeling on their hands and feet, and listen for slurred speech.

Follow-up Tests

The doctor may order blood tests. The tests may show problems that can be treated, such as anemia, infection, diabetes, thyroid, kidney and liver diseases.

The doctor may order a test that looks at brain wave activity or images of the brain.

Sometimes, a psychiatrist meets with the person to see if the person is depressed.

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Patient's Name _____

Please check any of the symptoms that the patient has had or has now:

	<i>Since when?</i>	<i>Has this problem gotten:</i>		
Problems with:				
<input type="checkbox"/> Losing or misplacing things	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Thinking of words	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Following conversations	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Being confused or disoriented	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Getting lost in a familiar area	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Doing simple tasks	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Paying attention	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Making decisions	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
Forgets:				
<input type="checkbox"/> Recent events	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Names	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Information from long ago	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
Changes in:				
<input type="checkbox"/> Personality	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Mood	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>better</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>worse</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>no change</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Appetite	<input type="checkbox"/> no change	<input type="checkbox"/> eats less	<input type="checkbox"/> overeats	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep	<input type="checkbox"/> no change	<input type="checkbox"/> sleeps too much	<input type="checkbox"/> difficulty going to sleep	
	<input type="checkbox"/> wakes up too early	<input type="checkbox"/> wakes up many times		
	<input type="checkbox"/> sleeps during the day, is awake at night			

Other problems? _____
